



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE DOG ATE MY TEFILLIN

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

The Gemara in Baba Kama, Daf 3, discusses two paradigms of damages. One is called Keren, which literally means "horn," and the other is called Shen, which literally means "tooth." Keren refers to an animal, such as a cow or ox, using its horn to gore another animal or object. For example, let's say my ox leaves my property, goes into my neighbor's property, and gores their animal. In that case, this is categorized as Keren. Since goring is considered unusual behavior for a tame (Tam) animal, the owner's liability is reduced, and they are only required to pay half the damages. On the other hand, Shen refers to damage caused when an animal benefits or enjoys itself, such as by eating or consuming something. For example, if my cattle leave my property, enter my neighbor's property, and eat their vegetation, this is categorized as Shen. Because eating vegetation is normal and expected behavior for cattle, the owner is fully liable for the damage and must pay the full cost. In short, Keren refers to intentional and unusual



BEING SMALLER GETS YOU HIGHER

Among the many qualities of Moshe Rabbeinu, his quality of humility stands out. The Torah testifies about Moshe that he was the greatest Anav (humble person) of all humankind. It is noteworthy that regarding his prophecy, as well, the Torah testifies that his level of prophecy was the greatest level any Jew will achieve, in fact, nobody could ever achieve his level.

In his discussion regarding humility Maharal teaches us that the connection one has with HaShem is directly proportional with one's level of humility. The more one thinks of themselves as an independent entity, free from support of HaShem, the further he will be from connecting to HaShem. The converse is also true, the sharper one is aware of his dependence upon HaShem for his every breath and every heartbeat, the sharper his awareness of HaShem will be and the deeper his connection with HaShem will be. It therefore follows that Moshe's prophecy as well as his humility were unrivaled. The two qualities work hand in hand.

From where did Moshe merit this incredible humility? Of course this was gifted to him by HaShem, nevertheless, I would like to suggest a possible influence that was engineered by HaShem.

Moshe's father, Amram, was the greatest leader among the Jewish people in his time. Shortly after Pharaoh decreed that all baby boys born would be killed, he and his wife separated. Amram reasoned, "why have more children

damaging behavior, with reduced liability (half damages), while Shen refers to behavior where the animal benefits itself, leading to full liability.

This leads us to the following true story:

In Israel, a man named Eli worked in a warehouse and needed to start work early. One morning, he brought his tefillin to work, put them on for davening, and then set them aside on a shelf. Later that day, he heard a commotion and discovered that a dog from a neighboring warehouse had gotten into his warehouse. The dog, after finding the leather boxes and leather straps of the tefillin, chewed up and completely destroyed the tefillin. These tefillin were actually quite expensive, they cost \$2000. Eli's loss was significant.

The owner of the dog was very apologetic and offered to pay for the damages. They both brought this question to Rav Zilberstein to determine how the case should be categorized according to Jewish law.

The question was: How do we classify this case?

On the surface, it would appear to be a case of Shen. The dog used its teeth to destroy the tefillin. If it was Shen, the owner would have to pay the full \$2000.

But Shen applies when the animal eats something or benefits from it. When the dog chewed up the tefillin, was it trying to eat the leather, thinking it was food? Perhaps it should be categorized as Keren (intentional damage). If it is Keren, the owner would only be liable to pay \$1000 damages because intentional damaging behavior is less typical.

The issue boils down to whether the tefillin should be seen as "food" in this context or as something the dog simply wanted to destroy. If it was food, the owner has more liability and needs to pay \$2000. If it was simply looking to destroy, then the owner has less liability and needs to pay \$1000. What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama, Page 49.



if they will be killed. It is better not to have children at all." being that Amram was the leader of the people, when he separated from his wife the entire nation followed suit.

Amram's five year old daughter, Miriam, spoke with her father telling him that what he had done by separating himself from her mother and the entire nation following his example, he was doing more harm to the Jewish people than Pharaoh. Pharaoh was only killing the boys, her father was effectively killing the boys and the girls. Upon hearing Miriam's argument he promptly took back his wife and the nation followed as well.

When contemplating this change of mind which Amram did on the basis of Miriam's argument one cannot help but be overwhelmed by the great humility that Amram pos-

sessed. He was the greatest leader of the people. He made a serious decision to separate from his wife and everyone followed him. To change his mind on the basis of his five year old daughter takes remarkable humility. What would people say? How could he face his peers, and so on.

The intentions that one has upon embarking on any endeavor have a profound impact on that endeavor. If one builds a community with the sole intent of creating a place of kiddush HaShem, then great kiddush HaShem will go forth from that community.

Given the strength of Amram's humility to return to his wife, it is no wonder that this union yielded the man whose humility elevated him to merit having the greatest level of prophecy.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE IGLOO

Greenland and Canada have been a topic in the news recently. Also, all of us recently experienced more snow than we are used to. Let's therefore learn about Igloos, that were most commonly used in Greenland's Qaanaaq region and Canada's Central Arctic. Bundle up! We're traveling to one of Earth's coldest regions, where icy winds whip across vast snowy landscapes. Life here is harsh, but for centuries, humans have thrived in this environment thanks to a remarkable invention: the igloo. The history of the igloo, which means "home" in the Inuit language, stretches back centuries. For generations, the Inuit and other Arctic peoples used igloos as their primary winter homes. These structures were especially common in Canada's Central Arctic, parts of Alaska, and Greenland's Qaanaaq region. Built entirely out of compacted snow, igloos allowed families to survive brutal winters where temperatures could drop as low as -49°F .

Igloos weren't just homes. They were multi-functional shelters. Smaller igloos were often used by hunters on extended trips, providing a temporary but warm refuge in the wilderness. Larger igloos, capable of housing 15–20 people, served as communal spaces for storytelling, ceremonies, or group gatherings. As the 20th century progressed, modern housing replaced igloos as permanent residences. Yet, igloos remain a symbol of cultural pride and are still constructed today for traditional practices, emergency shelters, and even tourism. You might think, "How can snow—a symbol of cold—possibly keep anyone warm?" The answer lies in its unique structure. Snow, especially the compacted variety used for igloos, is composed of up to 95% trapped air. This air acts as an excellent insulator, slowing the transfer of heat from the warm interior to the frigid exterior.

Inside an igloo, temperatures can rise to a cozy 19°F - 61°F —a far cry from the Arctic chill outside. Interior temperatures can rise $50\text{--}60^{\circ}\text{C}$ higher than the outside environment. This transformation from bitter cold to relative comfort highlights the brilliance of the Inuit's snow-based engineering.

Building an igloo requires skill, strategy, and knowledge passed down through generations. Let's explore the secrets of igloo design: The igloo's dome is a structural wonder. This shape, known as a catenary arch, evenly distributes weight across the surface. It can withstand heavy snow loads and fierce Arctic winds without collapsing. A well-built igloo can support the weight of a person standing on top. The dome also minimizes wind resistance, ensuring stability even in the harshest conditions. Inside, every feature is designed for warmth and efficiency: the entrance is built lower

than the main living area, allowing cold air to sink and stay out of the living space. Raised sleeping platforms trap warm air, which naturally rises, providing a cozy sleeping spot. A ventilation hole, a small opening at the top, prevents carbon dioxide buildup and ensures proper airflow. As occupants generate heat, the inner snow walls may melt slightly, and when the water refreezes, it forms a thin layer of ice, strengthening the igloo and improving insulation. The blocks of snow are arranged in a spiral pattern, with each block leaning inward, creating a self-supporting design that eliminates the need for additional materials, a perfect example of resourceful engineering.

Though simple in design, the interior of an igloo is surprisingly functional and comfortable. Sleeping platforms, made of compacted snow and covered with animal hides like caribou or seal skin, provide warmth and insulation. Snow benches, also lined with hides, offer a place to sit or work. Traditional Inuit igloos used qulliq, seal-oil lamps, to provide light and additional warmth, adding to the cozy atmosphere. Small shelves carved into the snow walls, storage niches, hold tools, supplies, and personal items. These thoughtful features transformed a simple snow shelter into a livable home. Despite their durability, igloos are surprisingly lightweight. A skilled builder uses snow blocks that are dense enough to provide strength but not so heavy that they're difficult to lift. This lightweight nature allows even a single person to construct an igloo if needed. Though igloos are associated with winter, they can last well into spring as long as temperatures remain below freezing. Even as the season changes, the structure's strength and insulation can remain intact, providing shelter for months. While humans primarily used igloos, they also benefited Arctic wildlife. When people abandoned an igloo, creatures like Arctic foxes, wolves, and even polar bears sometimes moved in, using the shelters as dens. Constructing a communal igloo required cooperation and teamwork. Families and neighbors often worked together to complete larger structures. This process strengthened bonds and reinforced the importance of community. Today, igloos are no longer used as primary residences. However, Inuit communities continue to build igloos for cultural demonstrations, educational purposes, and hunting expeditions. These activities help preserve traditional knowledge and skills, ensuring that the art of igloo-building isn't lost.

So next time you see snowflakes falling, imagine them becoming part of an igloo. Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world.

PAID IN FULL WITH A CUP OF HOT COCOA

Rabbi David Ashear shared the following beautiful story. Many years ago, in New York, a family was having trouble making ends meet. It got to the point where the father had no choice but to ask for handouts. He would send his oldest son, Jacob, knocking on doors in Jewish communities, requesting tzedakah. Jacob would be given a couple of dollars here and a couple of dollars there, and it would help support the family. Jacob always wanted to become a doctor, and his family wanted to support him as much as they could. Every night, when Jacob came back with money, his parents would take a dollar or two and set it aside for his future medical education. In the winter, in the freezing cold, it was especially difficult for Jacob to make his rounds. One night, he knocked on a door that had a sign outside: Levinstein Family. A young woman opened the door. "Please," Jacob said, "if you could give me just a little tzedakah, I would appreciate it." She checked her pockets for money, but didn't have any. Her father yelled down from upstairs, "Noa! Who's there?" "Someone for tzedakah!" she called back. "Enough with these collectors!" the father screamed in anger. "They come all the time! Don't give them a penny." The young lady felt bad. Well, if she couldn't offer him money, she could at least offer him a hot drink. She invited Jacob to come in for a minute and made him a cup of hot cocoa. Jacob could not remember the last time he drank something so delicious. The warm house and the warm beverage re-energized him, and he left in good spirits, thanking the nice young woman, Noa Levinstein, for her hospitality.

Twenty-two years later, Jacob was the top physician in his field and head of his unit in the hospital where he worked. One day, a patient was brought in with a rare, life-threatening illness. Her name was Noa Markovitz, and her father's name was Abe Levinstein (this information was filled out as part of her registration). Jacob remembered the name Noa Levinstein. This was the girl who had given him hot cocoa years earlier! From that moment on, Jacob went above and beyond anything a doctor would normally do for a patient. He personally paid for very expensive medications that the hospital did not provide. He flew in a doctor who he knew would be able to help. The treatment and care lasted for almost a year at the end of this time, Noa was back to normal. The time came for her to be discharged, and her husband and children were anxiously waiting in the hallway to bring her home. Her husband was given a large bill for the extensive treatments, somewhere in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. At the end of the bill were written the words: "Paid in full with a cup of hot cocoa." Noa's little deed was something that Jacob would never forget. He repaid her for it many, many times over because it was so precious to him.

All our deeds are unimaginably precious to Hashem and He will pay us for every one of them in the future, many, many times over.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the need to give maaser, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 487) wrote that the man had the right to acquire the money for the sole purpose of paying his debt. In that case, since the money was not regular income, it would not require maaser.

**This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the anniversary of
Lena and Menachem Dickman**

By their children Gavi, Nechama, Eli and Maya



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